apart from the effluents discharged from the unit.

Clearance of Factory in Orissa

*147. SHRI SANATAN BISI: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether all clearances have been granted to M/s. Sterlite Industries India Ltd. for the establishment of a factory at Bhurkamunda, District Jharsuguda (Orissa);

(b) whether his Ministry has received any protest petitions from the aggrieved person or Organisation; and

(c) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (PROF. SAIFUDDIN SOZ): (a) No application has been received from M/s Sterlite Industries India Limited seeking environmental and/or forestry clearance(s) from Government of India. However, Orissa Pollution Control Board has issued a Consent to Establish (NOC) on 22nd October, 1997 to this industry for establishment of a Smelter cum captive power plant at Bhurkamunda, District Jharsuguda, Orissa.

(b) Yes Sir. A representation has been received from Regional Centre for Development Cooperation, Bhubaneswar.

(c) The representation mainly concerns the procedures of public hearing of the project conducted by the State Pollution Control Board on 10.09.97.

Forest cover in Maharashtra

*148. MISS SAROJ KHAPARDE: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) the total forest cover in Maharashtra at present, district-wise;

(b) what steps Government propose to take to increase the forest area in the State in a big way; and

(c) the role being played by the State Government in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (PROF. SAIFUDDIN SOZ): (a) As per the State of Forest Report, 1995, published by Forest Survey of India, forest cover in Maharashtra is 43,843 sq. km. which is 14.2% of the geographical area. District-wise forest cover is given in the Statement. *(See below)*

(b) and (c) Steps taken for increasing forest cover and area in the State in a big way are as under:—

(i) Extensive plantations have been raised under different programmes under plan schemes, Western Ghat Development Programme, various schemes of District Rural Development Agency, Water Conservation, Rural Landless & Employment Guarantee Programme, Jawahar Rojgar Yojna, Employment Guarantee Scheme, and various centrally sponsored schemes.

(ii) The State Government had taken up extensive afforestation programme of social forestry under USAID project on community waste lands and private waste lands.

(iii) The State Government is implementing World Bank aided forestry project since 1992 with an outlay of Rs. 431.51 crores which envisages taking plantations over 3.76 lakhs hectares. Improving the productivity of the forest through technological upgradation and maintenance of biodiversity are also important component of the project.

(iv) Owners of private wastelands are being motivated to grow agroforestry crops through social forestry programmes with the involvement of the non governmental organisations.

(v) Joint Forest Management practices are being encouraged for conservation of forests.

(vi) The State Government is also trying to reduce demand for firewood through use of improved chullahs, solar cookers and other non-conventional energy sources.

(vii) Total ban has been imposed on felling of trees in the forest areas of ecologically fragile Western Ghats.

(viii) To prevent illicit felling in the forest area 51 mobile squad units and 300 check *nakas*, have been established and suitable wireless communication network have been established.

(ix) Forest officers have been empowered with the powers of Collector for summary eviction of encroachments on forest lands.

(x) The State Government has enacted Maharashtra Private Forest (Acquisition) Act, 1975 to acquire private forests for their better conservation and preservation.

(xi) The State Government is raising compensatory afforestation on equivalent non forest land under Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980 for diversion of forest lands for non-forestry purposes.

Statement

District-wise forest cover in Maharashtra as per state of forest report, 1995

No.	Name of District	Forest Cover in sq. Km.
1.	Ahmednagar	131
2	Akola	408
3	Amarvati	2,819
4	Aurangabad	264
5	Bhandara	2,855
6	Beed	35
7	Mumbai City	2
8	Mumbai Suburban	98
9	Buldana	620
10	Chandarpur	13,933
11	Dhule	2,477
12	Jalgoan	1,125
13	Raigarh	1,655
14	Kolhapur	1,319
15	Nagpur	1,747
16	Nanded	911
17	Nasik	950
18	Osmanabad	8
19	Parbhani	57
20	Pune	780
21	Ratnagiri	5,626
22	Sangli	81
23	Satara	526
24	Sholapur	33
25	Thane	2,410
26	Wardha	740
27	Yawatmal	2,233
	Total	43,843

LPG Distribution Policy

*149. SHRI S. MUTHU MANI: Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Ministry had decided to release 40 lakh new LPG connections and another 40 lakh double bottling connections during the year 1997-98;

(b) if so, the break-up of allocation being considered State-wise out of the above proposed release of 40 lakh new LPG connections:

(c) whether the Ministry had approved a new LPG distribution policy under which 1700 new distributors would be appointed; and

(d) if so, the State-wise break-up of allocation for appointement fo distributions?